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243 [73] ...to taboo against wet rice, but rarely raise it, because of the labor involved. The Zafimaniry still have a strong taboo against it. According to their own tradition, they were the last of the Merina groups to settle in the territory. They originally lived in the Ankaratra, a mountainous part of the plateau, and raised wet rice, like the other tribes of this area. Enemies attacked them when their men were dispersed, repairing their rice terraces. They were driven out of their territory and when they re-established themselves, they tabooed wet rice cultivation, which they held responsible for the calamity. The taboo is so strong that when Betsileo immigrants began to cultivate wet rice in their country, some twenty-five or thirty years ago, they broke down the terraces and destroyed the crop.

Tanala wet rice culture is still crude in comparison with that of the plateau tribes. They do not use fertilizer, sow in seed beds, or transplant. Terrace systems are still very rare. The soil of a natural swamp is turned over with spades to a depth of about 1 foot, all but the largest vegetation being dug in. Cattle are then driven back and forth over the plot until the earth is churned to a soft mush. The rice is sown broadcast but not trodden in. Later, the crop is weeded once or twice. The harvest ceremonies are the same as for the dry.

241 In addition to rice and the plants grown in the crop, the Menabe grow bananas, sweet potatoes and sugar cane. None of these are of 245 great economic importance. Bananas are planted in or near the villages, often in solitary clumps. The young plants are sometimes fenced to protect them from pigs, but require no other care. The fruit is small and of indifferent quality. It is cut green and hung up over the fireplace, where it soon becomes blackened with smoke. It is allowed to become soft and thoroughly ripe, then eaten raw. The plantain seems to be unknown.

246 171 The Tanala do not use banana fiber. The Betsileo, their neighbors, formerly used it extensively in weaving and raised certain [illegible] for [illegible] fiber. They [illegible] that it was the first material woven by them.

244 Sweet potatoes are grown from the shoots. Bunches of these are planted in holes at intervals of about 2 feet. The ground is not prepared. New patches may be weeded a month or two after planting, but the growth of the vines is so luxuriant that they soon strangle all other vegetation. The plants begin bearing in six to eight months and continue to produce for two or three years, after which the tubers become small and fibrous. The roots are dug a few at a time, as